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SUBJECT: SADC STATES PREPARE FOR U.N. MIGRATION FORUM (GFMD)

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Summary  
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¶1. At a September 21-23 forum in Cape Town, government officials from fourteen states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) discussed policies and programs to leverage migration for economic development. The workshop was a regional precursor for a wider U.N. event, the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), upcoming in November. Discussion themes included maximizing the benefits of remittances, mitigating "brain drain," protecting outbound migrant workers, and integrating inbound migrants. Overseas diasporas were targeted as sources of foreign direct investment, as well as of skills transfer through migrant returns in "circular migration" flows. Participants broke into working groups to formulate inputs to GFMD sessions, and they produced a set of 19 broad non-binding resolutions. End Summary.

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Background: MIDSA and GFMD  
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¶2. The Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) is an intergovernmental forum in which officials from fourteen SADC states discuss policy related to migration. It is organized annually by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP), with sponsorship from State/PRM. This year's September 21-23 workshop focused on formulating shared regional positions prior to a larger U.N. event, the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), in Athens on November 2-5. Delegates represented ministries of labor, economic development, and immigration. The overarching theme was integration of migration considerations into national and regional policy and planning frameworks, in order to maximize the benefits of migration and mitigate its drawbacks to foster socio-economic development.

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Remittances and Other Benefits  
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13. Remittances dominate the discourse on migration and development. The World Bank reports that to sub-Saharan Africa these amounted to \$29 billion in 2008 but were forecast to fall by eight percent in 2009 due to the economic crisis. Remittances made up 28 percent of the GDP of Lesotho, which sends many of its workers to South Africa. Lesotho allows 30 to 50 percent of workers' salaries to be remitted home tax-free, provides briefing sessions to outbound migrants, and has a well-structured visa program for outgoing domestic workers. In South Africa, which has experienced heavy migration both in and out since 1994, SAMP figures show growing two-way flows, reaching \$735 million in and \$1,067 million out in 2006 (unfortunately the most recent figures available). A 2006 SAMP survey of five African countries found that 84 percent of migrant-sending households received remittances back. (Yet 80 percent of that money was sent via informal channels, not banks, showing how hard these flows are to track.) SAMP's Jonathan Crush said remittances were mostly used for consumption, and the challenge was to channel them toward investment and business development.

14. Speakers noted a range of migration benefits. Receiving countries gain a greater supply of labor (especially in underserved areas like nursing and teaching); knowledge transfer from skilled professionals; potential job creation, incremental tax revenue, savings and investment; and creation of links to new export markets abroad. The 2009 U.N. World Development Report asserts that migrant workers' productivity is higher than that of nationals in destination countries, because migrants are forced to establish and prove themselves. Besides remittances, the benefits for source

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countries are reduced unemployment, foreign direct investment by members of the diaspora, and skill gains if or when migrants return. Within regions, migration yields cross-border spillover effects of economic development, such as wage and welfare convergence.

15. Two main pitfalls are "brain drain" and exploitation of migrants. Half of Zambian migrants in OECD countries are professionals, according to a 2004 survey. From 1997 to 2005 the number of licensed doctors in Zambia fell from 1,283 to 646, roughly half. Programs to defend migrant workers' rights were outlined by Faiyaz Qazi, a representative of the Colombo Process, a regional forum (and MIDSAs peer) among ten Asian labor-sending countries. That forum has developed a proactive "end to end" set of protections for migrant workers -- encompassing information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, advocacy for minimum wage and work standards and establishment of reception centers in host countries, training programs to make member countries' workers more competitive, establishment of safety-net welfare funds, and "brain gain" strategies for drawing back knowledge and technologies from the diaspora.

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Tapping the Diaspora  
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16. The rush is on to target diasporas as underexploited assets. Cautioning that its estimates are quite rough, SAMP counts 8.8 million Africans in the global North (the majority 7.3 million in the EU), 3.1 million in the South (mainly 2.6 million in the Mideast), and 13.2 million migrated cross-border within Africa. Of the estimated 1.6 million SADC nationals outside Africa, 70 percent are in Europe and only 13 percent in North America. Intraregionally (SADC nationals in other SADC countries), South Africa predictably hosts the largest intake (estimated 690,000 persons), with Zimbabwe a surprising second (450,000), followed by Tanzania (295,000), Malawi (240,000), and Mozambique (230,000).

¶7. Canada's International Development Research Centre has funded an online survey of the SADC diaspora in Canada -- mostly (40-50,000) South Africans, but also including Tanzanians, Angolans, Congolese, and lately Zimbabweans -- to assess their incomes and assets, engagement with home countries, and possible intent and motives for return. SAMP's Crush says preliminary evidence indicates very high levels of enduring interest in the nations of origin. Zimbabwe's delegation corroborated that point, citing surveys indicating that 58 percent of its diaspora wants to return one day.

¶8. Mauritian Anil Kokil outlined a bilateral agreement his government signed with France to promote "circular migration," via employment for a certain number of Mauritians in prescribed job categories over a set number of years, followed by their return to Mauritius carrying back needed skills. Migrants are incented to return with investment capital, to found small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as engines of job creation and economic growth. (Kokil crowed Qengines of job creation and economic growth. (Kokil crowed that the World Bank had coined the phrase "Mauritian miracle," and his President was invited to breakfast with President Obama.)

¶9. Other countries are launching outreach initiatives to their diasporas. DR Congo has created a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to liaise with Congolese abroad and represent their interests at home. The official is tasked with mobilizing diaspora skills, attracting funds for investment, and bringing knowledge and technology back into the country. The Zambian Foreign Affairs Ministry has proposed the idea of a similar diaspora office. To attract foreign direct investment from its nationals abroad, the Comoros has offered them shares in public projects at discounts of up to 50 percent.

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Working Groups on GFMD Themes  
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¶10. Participants split into working groups to discuss the three major themes to be raised at the GFMD in Athens. These themes, and the groups' flipchart presentations of their deliberations, are summarized below.

- (A) Migration and Millenium Development Goals (MDGs): Migration supports poverty eradication through remittances and diaspora links. With respect to maternal health (and related HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, and child mortality), skills retention and migrant return programs are most critical, along with rural socio-economic conditions and technology transfer. Thirdly, on development partnerships, the group emphasized the importance of bi-/multilateral agreements.
- (B) Migrant (Re-)Integration: Skill transfer was cited as a top priority, followed by data collection for planning. Employment access for migrants should be made equal to that of nationals. SADC states must ratify the UN conventions safeguarding human rights of migrant workers. Overseas nationals should be able to vote through their embassies. Migrants should be encouraged to participate in community awareness campaigns and business fora.
- (C) Policy Partnerships: To integrate migration into planning and programming, data must be collected on migration trends and push/pull factors. Ministries should be created to focus on migration and development. Regionally, an interministerial (and intersectoral) committee could be formed to facilitate collaboration on migration. Nationally, ministries of home affairs, labor, finance, and economy should work closely with international organizations and NGOs. Migration issues should be accounted for in national budgets.

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Outcomes: 19 Resolutions  
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¶11. Participants agreed on 19 (non-binding) resolutions to:

- reduce barriers to mobility;
- facilitate remittance flows;
- encourage retention and return of health workers;
- ratify relevant SADC, UN, and ILO conventions;
- emulate best practices, e.g. of the Colombo Process;
- engage myriad stakeholders, especially diasporas;
- generate research data as a basis for policies;
- create programs to support internal migration;
- identify SADC skill gaps to develop skill exchanges;
- confront economic crisis, not undercutting migrants;
- integrate migration into development planning;
- allocate budgets for migration planning and support;
- increase SADC cooperation on migration and development;
- convoke MIDSA at ministerial level;
- copy models of bilateral collaboration, e.g. Mauritius;
- underscore those MDGs most impacted by migration;
- engage and harness skills of diasporas and returnees;
- regularize the status of irregular migrants; and
- carry these recommendations to the GFMD in Athens.

(Note: Unabridged texts of the resolutions have been forwarded to the Department. End Note.)

GIPS